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to the study of folk-tales, in regard to the progress and results of which he expressed somewhat sceptical views. He offered some comments on the system of Tabulation of Folk-Tales as proposed by the Society. In regard to the origin and diffusion of folk-tales, he thought that not much had been ascertained ; and declared that he did not perceive any way of overcoming the initial difficulty as to the influence of European contact as affecting aboriginal narratives. He spoke of recent theories of totemism, and pointed out deficiencies, as he considered, in the evidence by which the hypothesis was supported. He read a letter from M. Sébillot, secretary of the French society, announcing that this society also proposes to give attention to the tabulation of folk-tales, adopting in general the system of the English society, with less attention to the summary, and more to the alphabetical index of incidents. M. Sébillot announced that the *Congrès des Traditions populaires* would be regularly biennial in its sessions, and would meet in 1891 in London, under the direction of Mr. Charles G. Leland.

DR. BRINTON'S ESSAYS AND THE STUDY OF AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY.—We are sometimes told that it is the characteristic of a highly cultivated mind to find the study of Greek or Semitic antiquity more interesting and important than that of primitive prehistoric life with which American investigations are concerned. Dr. Brinton's volume of collected essays ought to make clear how erroneous is this view. The reader cannot fail to perceive that the really important questions relating to Greeks and Semites are not such as deal with those peoples as isolated groups, but in their relation to humanity, and as part of a general and human archæology ; and that many of the problems relating to the more favored and civilized races are to be solved only through reference to those possessing a more primitive life.

If the entire range of the author's observation, literary, linguistic, ethnologic, and mythologic, be considered, it will be obvious that there are few great themes of human interest which may not receive light from American inquiries ; and it seems strange indeed that any student interested in any branch of archæologic investigation can fail to feel a benevolent interest in American research, even though his own specialty may incline him in another direction.

It is of course the section on Mythology and Folk-Lore which most directly interests the readers of this Journal. The direct relation between his studies and modern thought is emphasized by the writer at every step. In the first paper of this heading, entitled, "The Sacred Names in Quiche Mythology," he writes : " Both in America and in the Orient the myths of the hero-god born of a virgin, and that of the descent into Hades, are among the most common. Their explanation rests on the universality and prominence of the processes of nature which are typified under these narratives." And in the third article, "The Journey of the Soul," he says : "The thoughts in these faiths" (Egyptian, Aryan, Aztec) "which I have described are the same. In each of them the supposed history of the destiny of the soul follows that of the sun and the stars. In all of them the spirits are believed to descend into or under the surface of the earth, and

then, after a certain lapse of time, some fortunate ones are released, to rise like the orbs of light into the heavens above." These notions, almost universal to the race of man, as Dr. Brinton considers, have persistently "retained their sway over the religious sentiments and expressions," as appears in many religious formulas of our own time. The volume of the President of The American Folk-Lore Society must make clear how catholic, and closely related to all human interests, are the purposes of a true student of American Folk-Lore.

*W. W. N.*

**TOSSING UP A CHIP** (vol. iii. p. 30).—The practice of tossing up a chip, and guessing whether the wet or dry side would come uppermost, was familiar to my boyhood in southern Wisconsin. I think we used it in other things as well as in deciding the "innings" of a game. I do not think that there was any belief in it as a charm, but that the spittle merely marked the chip, so that the different sides could be recognized. It was therefore precisely like calling "heads" or "tails" in deciding by the toss of a coin. I do not believe that any of my companions had learned it from the Wabanaki, and I imagine that it was common among older persons in our community. The Indians are just as likely to have learned it from the whites, but the probabilities are that it has been used by many peoples, quite independently, as the simplest possible form of casting lots.

*H. E. Warner, Washington, D. C.*

**SPITTING ON THE HANDS** (vol. iii. p. 58).—As to spitting on the hands when trying to take a firm hold of any implement, I take it that the idea is not to moisten the thing grasped, which might make it more slippery. Spittle is decidedly sticky, and I think it entirely probable that there is often a temporary advantage in spitting on the hands, though not to any such extent as would be supposed from its general use. But, in chopping, or using an axe, shovel, or pitchfork, only one hand grips the handle, which slides through the other hand as the blow or thrust is given. Here the stickiness of the spittle is an actual hindrance, as I learned very early, and consequently I never indulged much in the practice, which is, I believe, nearly universal among laborers. It may, of course, be a survival of a belief in its power as a charm, but I think it grows out of experience of its utility in some things, thoughtlessly applied to a multitude of things where it is of no use.—*H. E. Warner.*

**THE FOLK-LORE OF BONES.**—Dr. Brinton's article in the last number of the Journal (p. 17) suggests a note with reference to the English Gypsies. These have but one established word for a fairy, goblin, or other small creature of the kind. It is *kuklos*, or *kukalos*,—the modern Greek *kokkalon*, a bone. They also call a bone by the same name. In Greece, as in India, there is the same connection, and in both there are stories to the effect of a bone becoming a goblin. In European folk-lore sometimes it is an old woman who carries home a bone and hears it talk; sometimes it is the bone whistle, made of a bone of the murdered prince, which sings a